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SUBJECT: NO CAMBODIAN PLANS TO PURSUE CIVIL NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM

REF: STATE 127423

1. (U) Cambodia does not have plans for a civil nuclear program at this time. Cambodia's energy infrastructure is currently very underdeveloped; most electricity is produced by diesel-powered generators. Only about 18 percent of the population is connected to the electricity grid. The Royal Government of Cambodia's (RGC) top energy priorities right now are: 1) pursuit of cheaper and/or domestic energy sources such as coal and hydropower, 2) development of a better national and regional grid, and 3) rural electrification.

2. (U) Pol/Econ Assistant met with Tun Lean, Director General, General Department of Energy at the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy (MIME) on December 5. Tun Lean welcomed any interest from the U.S. civil nuclear industry but cautioned that Cambodia is still a long way from implementing its own civil nuclear program. He said that the RGC currently required training on trans-border safety standards and related negotiations; he said that Vietnam and Thailand want to build nuclear power plants near Cambodia's borders, and that MIME had concerns about potential impacts to Cambodia.

3. (U) Tun Lean also said that a South Korean professor at The University of Battambang, Dr. Hah Chang Joo, had approached MIME about developing a workshop with South Korean civil nuclear program experts to introduce basic industry concepts but had not yet begun to organize the workshop. COMMENT: Any U.S. assistance should similarly focus on basic education or capacity building, as Cambodian officials have little to no experience in the civil nuclear industry. END COMMENT.

RODLEY